



*Embracing curious minds. Nurturing compassionate hearts.*

May 5, 2021

Dear SJF Families,

As we turn the calendar to May, it is amazing to reflect on how much we've accomplished as a school community over the last twelve months. It hasn't always been easy and many of our days have undoubtedly felt long. Please know how grateful I am for the entire community's support for the faculty and staff, for our overall mission at St. John Fisher, and, most importantly, for our students, your children. From successfully weathering a school shutdown to embracing the new normal of social distancing, mask wearing, and virtual learning, it's really our children that have led the way, and from day one, they did it with positive attitudes and open minds and hearts. I could not be more proud of their efforts and their achievements, and I hope we all take the time to recognize those efforts and congratulate them on a job well done during a very challenging year.

I am also so proud to work beside our talented and resilient faculty and staff, Fr. Ken and the parish staff, our school advisory board, the FSA, and related parish groups like the Women's Club and Holy Name Society. Together we have collectively made efforts to not only adjust and re-direct our talents to address the immediate needs of a COVID-impacted year but also to remain "fearlessly focused on our future," as we described in the recent State of Our School update in March. If you weren't able to join us for that event or haven't seen the presentation, I'd encourage you to review it [here](#). It details how we continue to diligently work together in a spirit of unity and hopefulness to ensure our school has the resources – human, physical, and financial – to deliver the best possible education to our families, so our children are prepared to grow into successful, knowledgeable and conscientious adults.

As we are all fully aware, the availability of these resources heavily relies on the financial sacrifices of our families to support the mission of Catholic education generally and of St. John Fisher specifically. Please know that we in leadership do not take those sacrifices for granted. We know you view tuition and fees as a valuable, worthwhile investment in your children. We are grateful for that investment, and we make every effort to keep that investment as affordable as possible. That said, the cost of delivering the quality of education we hold ourselves accountable to continues to increase. We will be adjusting our tuition and fee schedule for next year and the rationale behind that is explained below.

## Guiding Principles for Financial Decisions

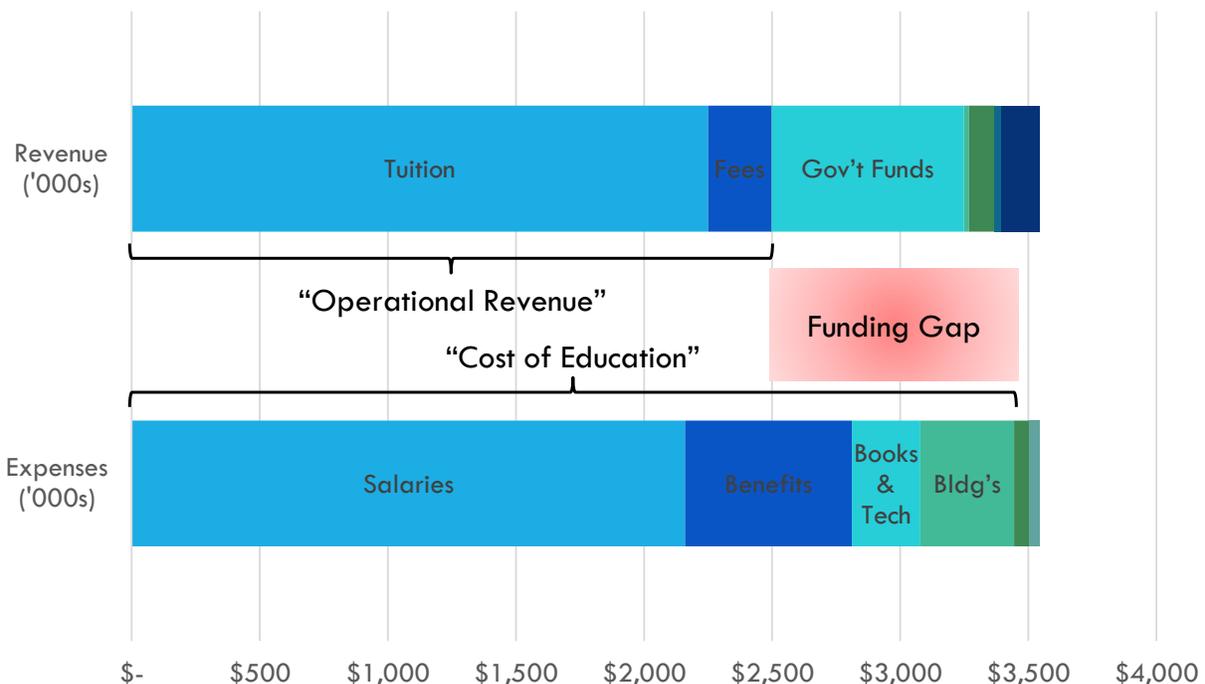
Whenever the leadership team and the school advisory board gathers to review our financial position and debate recommendations on tuition changes, investment priorities, etc., we always remind ourselves of a series of guiding principles we've established to balance the competing interests at play. I share them with you here because they provide the context behind our recommendations:

- **Maintain as affordable tuition as possible to be able to serve the maximum number of families**
  - Always seek operational efficiencies before implementing revenue increases
  - Align cost increases directly with pre-identified goals in the strategic plan
- **Maintain small class sizes to best enable individual attention and differentiated learning**
  - Target <18 students per class through K, <20 through 2<sup>nd</sup>, and <24 from 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>
  - Increase availability of in-classroom aids and resource programs as much as possible
- **Ensure faculty's and students' efforts are not hindered by a lack of available resources**
  - Complete an annual curriculum and performance review to identify gaps and needs
  - Seek creative ways to increase funding for salaries and materials to attract top talent
  - Target at least one major technology and one major facility upgrade each year
- **Provide transparency in financial communications, no matter how difficult**

## 2020-21 Financial Summary

As was discussed during our State of Our School update, we have been fortunate to be a recipient of significant government funding in the form of Paycheck Protection Program ("PPP") loans both last fiscal year and this one. The loans have allowed us to keep our faculty fully staffed and our budget balanced without materially increasing tuition. Without PPP, our operational deficit would amount to over \$1,000 per student this year. You can see the detail in this chart:

### Revised 2020-21 School Budget



A few other statistics from this year’s finances I would highlight include the following:

- Faculty and staff salaries and benefits make up >80% of total expenses and will consume >100% of collected tuition and fees
- Curriculum and technology expenses comprise ~10% of total expenses as do building, cleaning, utility, and insurance expenses in aggregate
- Other non-academic administrative expenses and our Archdiocesan assessment each comprise <1% of annual expenses
- Our average school family has two enrolled children, and after accounting for our multi-student family discount and all fees and required fundraising, our average cost per student this year will total approximately \$5,000

**Proposed 2021-22 Tuition & Fee Structure**

Based on enrollment and cost projections and continuing to work to directly tie our various fees to their corresponding expenses, we have set tuition and fees for the 2021-22 school year per the tables below.

The tuition rates reflect an increase of \$300 per student:

<b>Full-time Tuition</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>% Discount</b>	<b>Per Family</b>	<b>\$ Change</b>	<b>% Change</b>
1st Student	\$ 5,315	\$ 5,615	n/a	\$ 5,615	\$ 300	5.6%
2nd Student	3,570	3,870	31.1%	9,485	600	6.8%
3rd Student	2,815	3,115	44.5%	12,600	900	7.7%
4th Student	1,600	1,900	66.2%	14,500	1,200	9.0%
5th+ Student	-	-	100.0%	14,500	1,200	9.0%
<b>Part-time Pre-School</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>% Discount</b>	<b>Per Family</b>	<b>\$ Change</b>	<b>% Change</b>
3 Day Full-Day	\$ 3,200	\$ 3,500	37.7%	n/a	\$ 300	9.4%
5 Day Half-Day	2,675	2,925	47.9%	n/a	250	9.3%
3 Day Half-Day	1,600	1,800	67.9%	n/a	200	12.5%

Fee changes include increases in three of our book day fee line-items: Books, Curriculum, and Supplies; Technology; and Lunchroom Supervision. Each of these increases are directly related to increased spending in these areas.

<b>Book Day Fees</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>Fee Base</b>	<b>\$ Change</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Registration / Admin	\$ 50	\$ 50	Per Family	\$ -	0.0%
Books, Curriculum, & Supplies	200	250	Per Student	50	25.0%
Technology	125	200	Per Student	75	60.0%
Lunchroom Supervision	25	50	Per Student	25	100.0%
Archdiocesan Assessment	50	50	Per Student	-	0.0%
FSA Membership	50	50	Per Family	-	-
Manna Fundraising Requirement	300	300	Per Family	-	-

**Regarding curriculum**, we spent approximately \$150,000 this year on books and curriculum-related software licenses, with the largest portion of that going to our refreshed reading program materials. We expect to spend the same this coming year but with the largest portion going to renewed and refreshed math program materials. The increased fee reflects our continued commitment to put the right educational materials in the hands of our students and teachers.

**Regarding technology**, as you know, we significantly expanded our 1:1 technology device program this past year, spending nearly \$250,000, largely with funding made available from the government. While that funding allowed for the purchase of individual devices and classroom smart boards, it will not cover the associated licenses, maintenance, and infrastructure costs required to get the most of the program expansion on a go-forward basis. Approximately half of the technology increase will help cover those costs, expected to total just over \$100,000 next year, and the other half will be to cover device insurance, so accidental damage and repair costs don't require our technology staff to manage and recoup charges from individual families when they occur.

Together, we estimate these tuition and fee changes to result in the average cost per student for the average family to be approximately \$5,500 next year. This represents a 10% year-over-year increase, a level we generally aim to stay well below of, but one that we estimate will only make up approximately half of our otherwise-projected deficit. We plan to make up the rest through various fundraising initiatives, continued creative application for third party grant funds, and the selective spending of our long-term savings. Please be mindful of this ongoing need for financial support beyond tuition and fees as we move into next year. As more specific plans for those initiatives are determined, we will keep you posted as we ask for your continued generosity and investment in St. John Fisher.

#### **Additional Near-term Investments**

Meanwhile, please know that, as mentioned above, we continue to constantly benchmark ourselves and assess our strengths and weaknesses relative to our peers and also our successes against achieving the goals outlined in our 5-year strategic plan. Highlights achieved this past year were largely in the welcome and academic areas, including the following:

- Major investments in counseling and social-emotional learning resources
- Establishment of new health and safety protocols to protect against COVID
- Several joint initiatives with FSA and other parish groups to promote a welcoming culture
- The aforementioned expansion of our 1:1 technology program
- Implementation of the iReady ongoing assessment program
- Addition of several teaching aids across our lower grade classrooms and resource program
- Major investments in a refreshed, school-wide reading program

Before next year starts, we are hopeful that we'll be able to focus on some long-desired physical plant improvements and to put a greater focus on live in-person opportunities to partner as families and teachers in our children's academic success and to enjoy the many social benefits that help knit our community together and make St. John Fisher unique. Specific initiatives include the following:

- Summertime electrical and HVAC upgrades
- Several landscaping projects to beautify our campus and make our outdoor space more usable
- Re-introduction of a school-wide STEAM Fair
- Introduction of a school-wide service day

#### **Hope and Gratitude**

We are also hopeful that we will continue to work our way back toward a pre-pandemic "normal". While we don't yet know whether that means we will be able to ditch our masks or

resume cohort switching or not, we do have confirmation on plans for most of our year-end activities, including in-person graduation, as well as an initial list of key dates for next year. I will provide more detail on both at the end of this week in Notes from Mrs. Nash. *In the meantime, if you have any questions on tuition, our financial position, financial aid, or suggestions for improvement, as always, please do not hesitate to contact me, or if you prefer to provide that feedback through our school advisory board, you can do so via e-mail at [sjfsab@gmail.com](mailto:sjfsab@gmail.com).*

Lastly, I want to close by again reiterating that I know supporting a Catholic education for your children and specifically partnering with us at St. John Fisher is a choice and a sacrifice you make financially. I thank you for that sacrifice for and investment in your children. I am confident it will pay dividends down the road. I hope you share that confidence. While we certainly have our challenges, we have many more things going for us, most notably our wonderful students and our talented faculty. It is on the backs of these strengths that I look forward to continuing to serve you and lead our school forward.

With hope for our shared futures, in unity with our common mission, and full of gratitude for your continued support,

*-Mrs. Maura Nash*